

*Supernatural Beliefs*

205

ings about ghosts are issued during childhood. Boys and girls are warned not to go abroad at night lest they be attacked by ghosts, not to approach the places specified as the land of the dead lest an accident befall them, not to go near the platform on which the dead are exposed lest the ghosts which hover around harm them, and not to whistle at night lest they attract these dangerous supernatural beings. Adolescents are warned not to disobey the commands of a ghost as they are issued through the medium of a possessed person lest they come to harm. [787] [882]

The Kwoma believe that certain people have the power to injure or kill by means of sorcery. They do so either by inserting a magical "poison" into food to be eaten by the victim or by burning in a special clay pot certain materials, particularly food leavings, blood, and semen, which have been associated with the victim. A child is first warned about sorcery during the weaning period, when he is told not to eat food given him by anyone except a close relative, lest there be "poison" in it, and not to eat away from home lest he carelessly spill crumbs with which he can be sorcerized. These warnings are repeated during childhood, and others are added. A boy is warned not to spill the blood of the snakes and marsupials which he kills, lest it be found by a sorcerer and used against him. He is also warned to be careful not to spill his own blood when he cuts himself. Adolescent boys are warned not to have sexual intercourse with a girl who is likely to give his sperm to a sorcerer. Adolescent girls are warned to dispose of their menstrual blood carefully, so that it cannot be used as sorcery material. [869] [754] [862] [858] [882] [833] [841]

The Kwoma believe that food is converted into blood, which remains in the system for a time and then deteriorates. Good (fresh) blood is responsible for the health of an adult and the normal growth of a child. Bad (deteriorated) blood causes sickness and pain and prevents normal growth. It follows from this theory that bad blood must be removed from the system in order to insure good health and normal growth, and that care must be taken not to eat food contaminated with bad blood and thus get it back into the system. 869 826